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Hecker

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(54) **SPICE GRINDING AND DISPENSING DEVICE**

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U.S.C. 154(b) by 18 days.

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Related U.S. Application Data

(57) **ABSTRACT**

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6, 2007.

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A47J 42/04 (2006.01)

(52) **U.S. Cl.** **241/169.1**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 241/169,
241/169.1

See application file for complete search history.

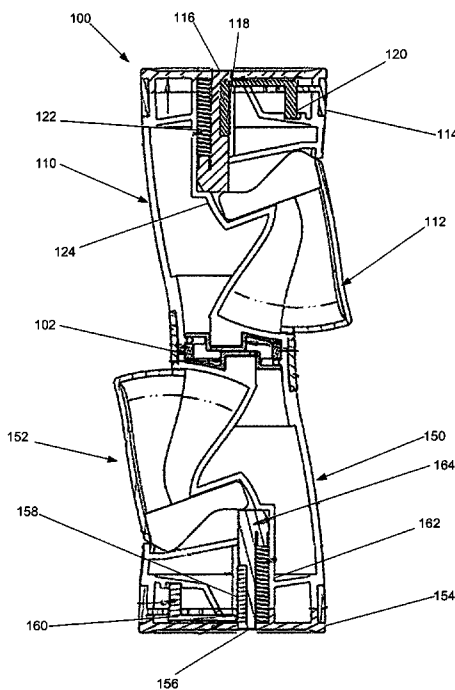
A spice grinding and dispensing device generally intended to
be used for grinding one spice in a first portion and a second
spice in the other portion. Each portion of the dual spice
grinder includes a handle or trigger that activates an independ-
ent rasp mechanism. When the trigger is pressed, the rasp
activated thereby moves down and forces ground spice
through an opening. The pressure of the rasp against the
inside of the bottom of the grinder breaks up the spice, and
only spice that is properly sized can fit through the opening.
Furthermore, the opening may be adjustable so that a user can
create a coarse or finely ground spice.

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12 Claims, 4 Drawing Sheets



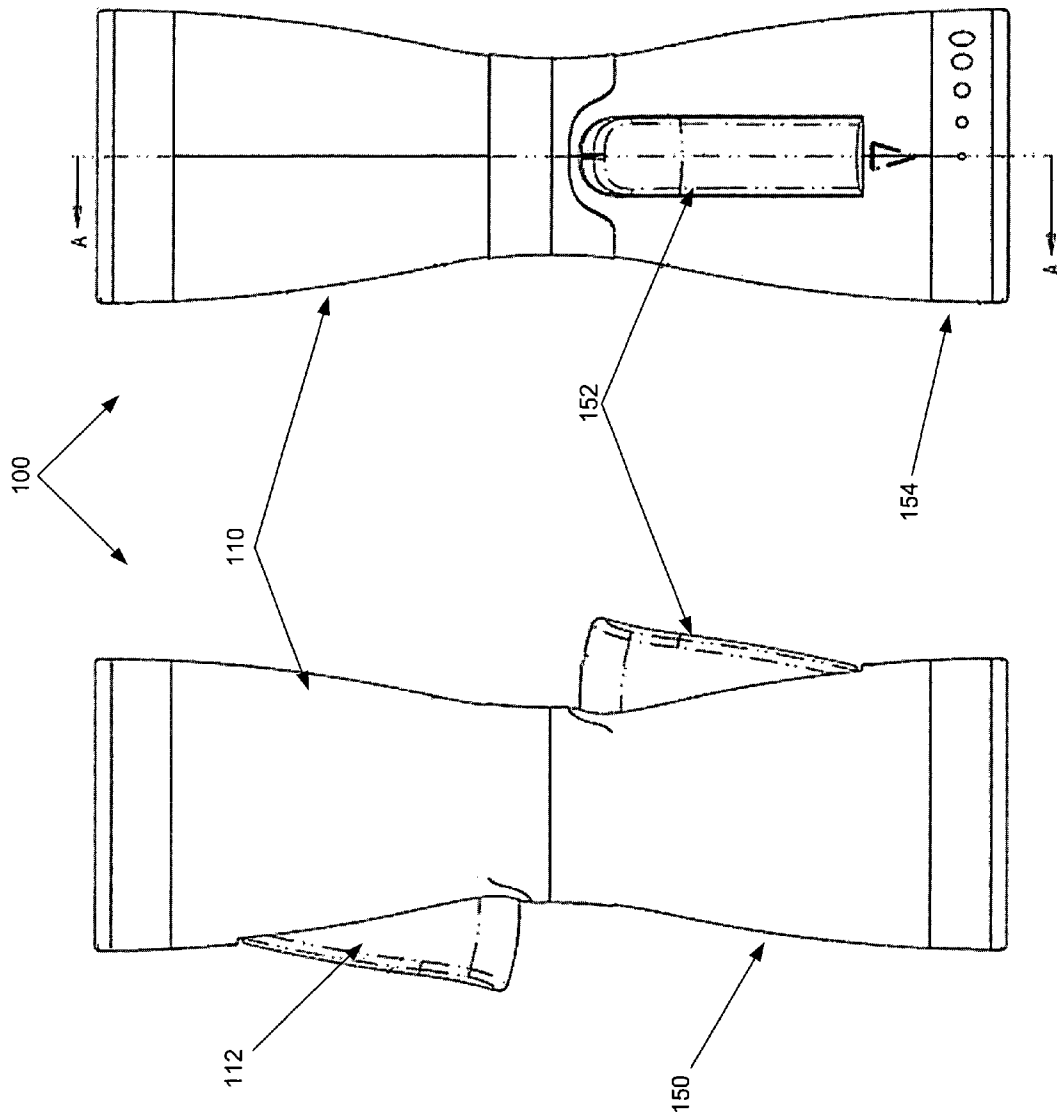


FIG. 1B

FIG. 1A

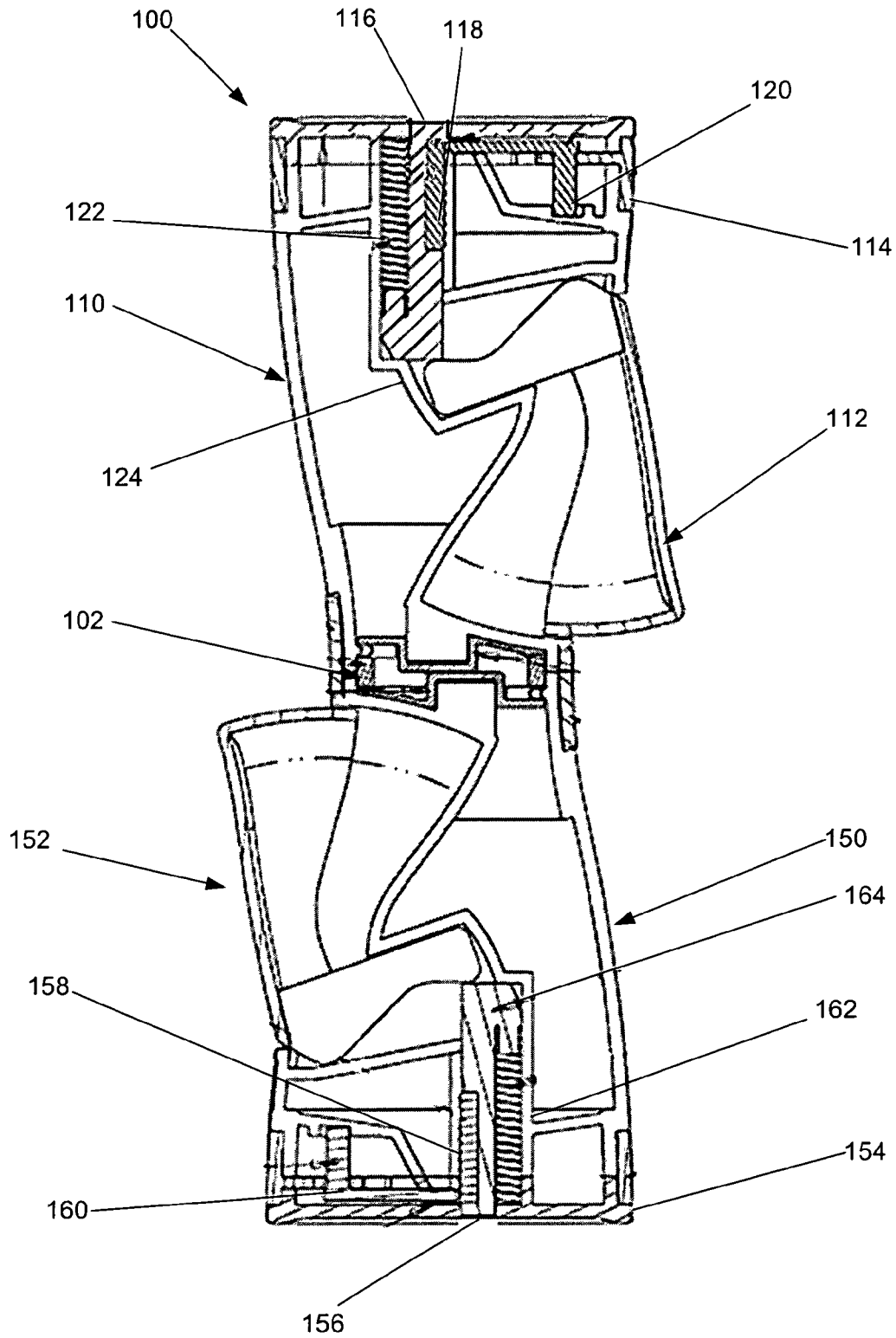


FIG. 2

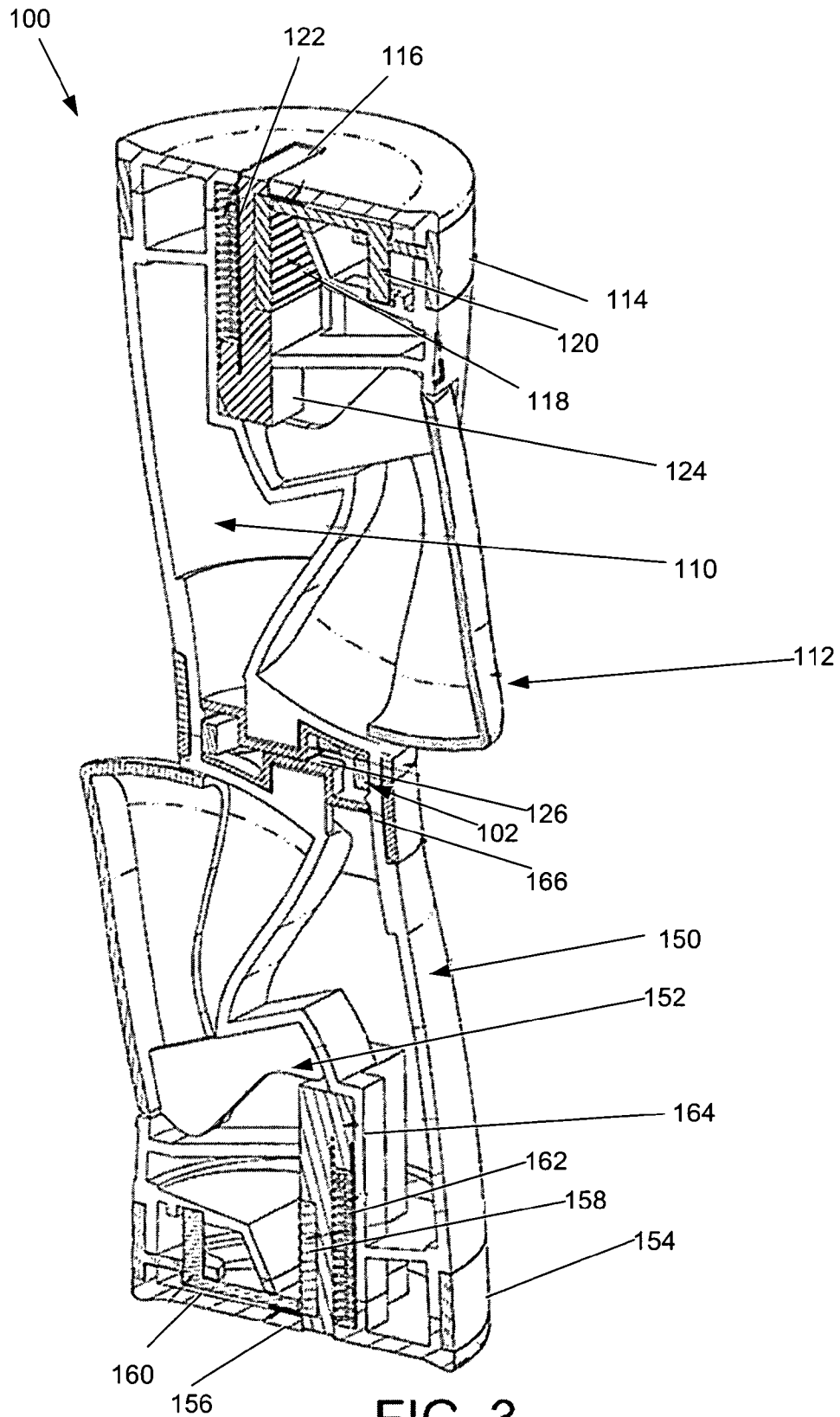


FIG. 3

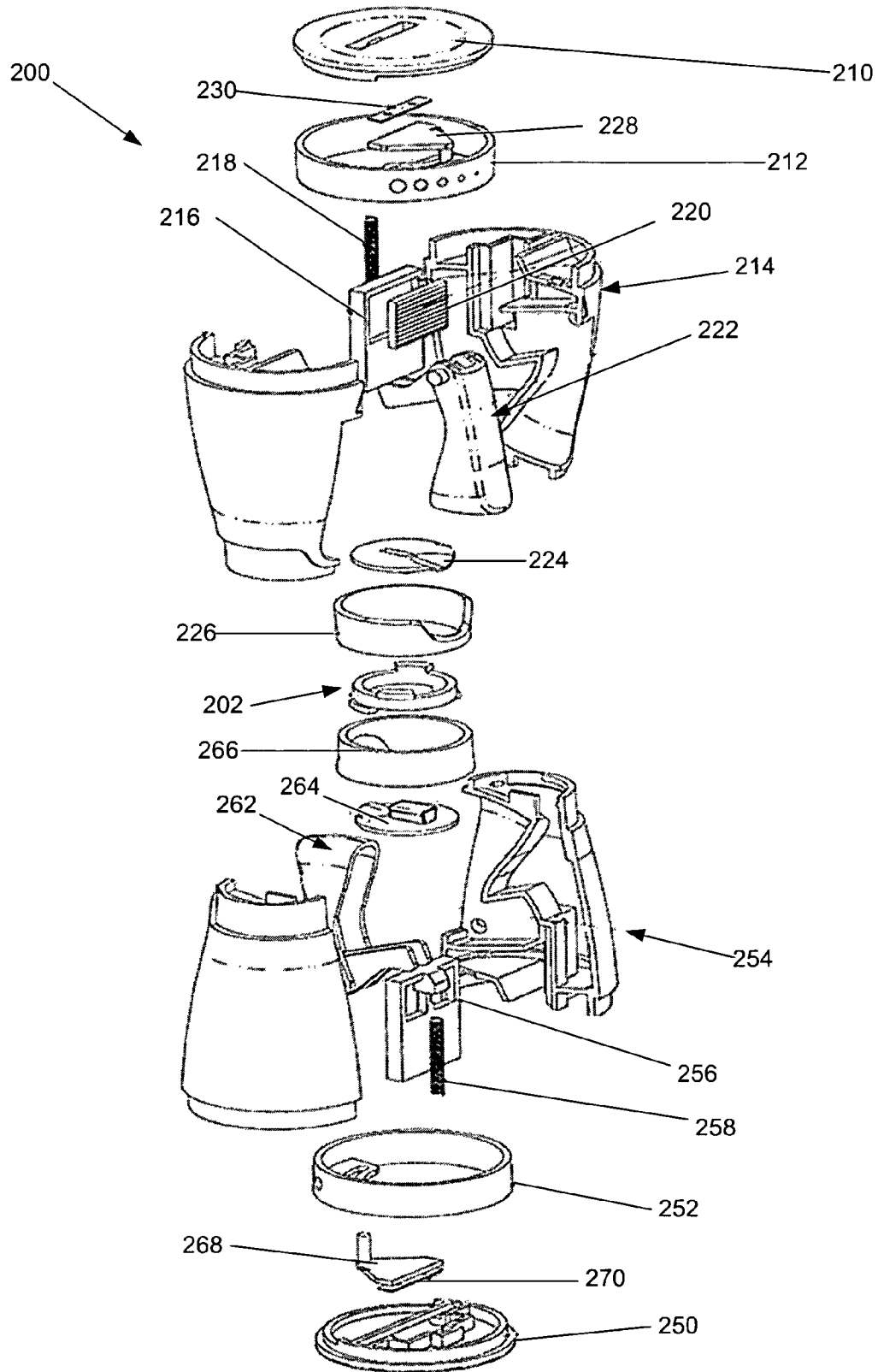


FIG. 4

SPICE GRINDING AND DISPENSING DEVICE**CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

This application claims benefit under 35 U.S.C. §119(e) of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 60/893,235 filed 6 Mar. 2007, which application is hereby incorporated by reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**1. Field of the Invention**

The present invention relates generally to a spice grinding and dispensing device, and in particular to a dual spice grinding and dispensing device that can be manipulated with one hand.

2. Description of Related Art

Grinding and dispensing devices are used in a variety of industries, for many different purposes. Generally, grinding and dispensing containers contain specific contents, such as particulates, which can be dispensed by an individual when desired. To prevent the contents of the container from being dispensed accidentally, many dispensing containers include a cap or lid that remains on the container during periods of nonuse, and is not subject to accidental opening.

In the food industry, grinding and dispensing containers that contain solid foods, such as herbs or spices, in granular or powder-like form, are commonly used. Dispensing containers are often bountiful in the kitchen, containing such materials as salt, pepper, basil, cinnamon, dill, mustard powder, garlic salt or powder, ginger, thyme, rosemary, nutmeg, oregano, paprika, parsley, saffron, and turmeric. Such materials are key ingredients in a variety of recipes for various foods.

In the culinary arts, a busy kitchen can be the focal point of creation, disarray, and demanding conditions. Amateur and professional chefs are often required to multitask during the cooking and/or creation process. For example, a cook may be stirring a substance with one hand, while adding additional ingredients with the other hand. Additionally, only one clean hand may be available for handling grinding and dispensing containers and utensils, because the other hand has been handling or preparing the food ingredients.

What is needed therefore is a grinding and dispensing device that is capable of being manipulated with one hand to both grind and dispense multiple spices. Additionally, such a grinding and dispensing device should allow a user to restrict the size of the granulated spice to be dispensed. It is to such a device that the present invention is primarily directed.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Briefly described, in preferred form, the present invention is a unitary spice grinding and dispensing device with two portions, or halves, generally intended to be used for grinding one spice in a first portion and a second spice in a second portion. Thus, the present grinding and dispensing device includes a first portion and a second portion, each capable of separately containing contents to be grinded and dispensed. A mating assembly is provided for releasably securing the first portion to the second portion. The mating assembly can be a variety of assemblies, for example male and female elements cooperatively places and sized for snapping engagement, and a threaded assembly for threading the two portions together.

Each of the first and second portions includes a hand-activated grinding assembly comprising a rasp activation trig-

ger and a rasp mechanism, whereupon activation, the rasp mechanism grinds at least a portion of the contents in the portion, and the ground up portion of the contents capable of dispensing from the portion. The rasp activation trigger can be a handle or trigger, a portion of which extends beyond the side of the portion from hand activation. For example, when the trigger of the first portion is pressed, the rasp of the first portion is activated, and forces the contents through a small opening of the first portion. The pressure of the rasp against the inside of the bottom of the first portion breaks up the contents, and only elements of the contents that are small enough to fit through the small opening can exit.

One or more of the portions can comprise an adjustable dispenser, such that a user can select the granularity level of ground contents that can be dispensed from the at least one portion. Thus, the opening can be adjustable so that the user can create a coarse or finely ground spice. The spice grinding and dispensing device allows a user to easily and quickly grind and dispense two spices using a single hand and a single device.

Each portion of the grinding and dispensing device can have a content filling end located in proximity to the mating assembly, and a dispensing end located distal the content filling end, although the place where contents are filled into the portion, and the place where ground content are dispensed from the portion, need not be on opposite ends of the portion. Preferably, the content filling end of each portion comprises a releasable plug assembly for filling each portion with content through the plug assembly (a plug and cooperatively-size aperture), and each dispensing end of each portion comprises an adjustable dispenser, such that a user can select the granularity level of ground contents that can be dispensed from the dispensing end of each portion.

A principle object of the present invention is to provide a grinding and dispensing device for multiple spices that can be operated with only one hand activation.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a grinding and dispensing device for multiple spices that can be used to grind and dispense multiple spices at a selected granularity level.

These and other objects, features and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent upon reading the following specification in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

FIGS. 1A-1B, collectively known as FIG. 1, illustrate side views of a grinding and dispensing device in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates a cross sectional view of the grinding and dispensing device of FIG. 1B in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates a perspective view of a cross section of a grinding and dispensing device in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

FIG. 4 illustrates an exploded view of a grinding and dispensing device in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

The detailed description explains the exemplary embodiments of the invention, together with advantages and features, by way of example with reference to the drawings.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring now in detail to the drawings, wherein like reference numerals represent like parts throughout the several

views, a grinding and dispensing device **100** in accordance with an exemplary embodiment of the invention is illustrated in FIG. **1**. The grinding and dispensing device **100** is designed to present a unitary look, yet comprising a first portion **110** (shown as being on the top of the device **100**), and second portion **150** (shown as being on the bottom device **100**), which are each designed to grind and dispense their own contents, which can be different.

While the device **100** is designed to present a unitary look, the first portion **110** and the second portion **150** can be removably affixed to one other at mating assembly **102**. Mating assembly **102** permits the first portion **110** and the second portion **150** to be separated from each other such that each portion **110**, **150** can be used individually, and can be refilled with, for example, spice particulates, if such refilling for each portion **110**, **150** occurs via the proximity of the mating assembly **102**.

The grinding mechanisms of each portion **110**, **150** of the spice grinding and dispensing device **110** include a handle that moves a spring-loaded rasp, an aperture through which ground contents can exit the housing, and an adjustment mechanism to provide selected granularity levels of the contents.

The first portion **110** includes a first handle **112** designed to activate the grinder in the first portion **110**. Likewise, the second portion **150** includes a second handle **152** designed to activate the grinder in the second portion. In exemplary embodiments, the first handle **112** and the second handle **152** can be disposed on opposite sides, either horizontally and/or vertically, of the grinding and dispensing device **100**. Additionally, the positioning of the first handle **112** and the second handle **152** allow both handles to be selectively activated by a user using only one hand.

The first portion **110** also includes a first selection device **114**, which is operable to control the maximum size of the spice particulate to be dispensed by the first portion **110**. Likewise, the second portion **150** includes a second selection device **154**, which is operable to control the maximum size of the spice particulate to be dispensed by the second portion **150**.

In exemplary embodiments, the first portion **110** and the second portion **150** can be constructed, partially or wholly, of a plastic material with translucence, such that a user can view the amount of spice in each portion of the grinding and dispensing device **100**. Additionally, a portion of the spice grinding and dispensing device **100** can be coated in a non-slip, or rubber like, material to facilitate the gripping of the spice grinding and dispensing device **100** by a user.

A cross sectional view of the grinding and dispensing device **100** of FIG. **1** in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the present invention is illustrated in FIG. **2**. As shown, the first portion **110** includes a first spice aperture **116**, which is designed to allow grinded spice particulates to be dispensed there through. The first selection device **114** is affixed to a first selection bar **120** that is used to alter the size of the first spice aperture **116**. Likewise, the second portion **150** includes a second spice aperture **156**, which is designed to allow grinded spice particulates to be dispensed there through. The second selection device **154** is affixed to a second selection bar **160** that is used to alter the size of the second spice aperture **156**.

A first spice rasp **118** is located in the first portion **110** that is designed to grind the spice located in the first portion **110** responsive to a force exerted on the first handle **112**. The second portion **150** includes a second spice rasp **158** that is designed to grind the spice located in the second portion **150** responsive to a force exerted on the second handle **152**.

The first portion **110** includes a first spring **122** that communicates with a first spice rasp holder **124**, which in turn is in operable communication with the first handle **112**. The second portion **150** includes a second spring **162** that communicates with a second spice rasp holder **164**, which in turn is in operable communication with the second handle **152**.

In exemplary embodiments, the first spice rasp **118** and the second spice rasp **158** can be constructed of various materials, which can be selected based on the particular spice that will be ground by the rasp. For example, a metal rasp can be used for grinding pepper due to the required strength of the rasp for grinding pepper. Likewise, a ceramic rasp can be used for grinding salt due to the corrosiveness of salt. Furthermore, other rasp materials can be selected for use with additional spices.

Referring now to FIG. **3**, a perspective view of a cross-section of the spice grinding and dispensing device **110** is illustrated. The spice grinding and dispensing device **110** operates by receiving a force exerted on handle **112**, **152** (preferably a squeezing force) that activates a rasp **118**, **158** and a rasp holder **124**, **164** against the force of a spring **122**, **162**.

When the user orients the portion **110**, **150** he/she wishes to use downward (in FIG. **3**, this is portion **150**), the interior walls of the portion **110** and the second portion **150** guide the un-ground spice to the rasp **118**, **158** with the help of gravity and responsive to a force on the handle **112**, **152** the rasp grinds the spice. The ground spice is then dispensed from within the spice grinding and dispensing device **110** through the aperture **116**, **156** at the dispensing end of the spice grinding and dispensing device **110**. The selection device **114**, **154** that can be moved to partially cover the aperture **116**, **156** to varying degrees, controls the maximum size of the aperture **116**, **156**, and thus the size of the ground spice particulates to be dispensed.

The first portion **110** and the second portion **152** are removably affixed to one another at mating assembly **102**. The first portion **110** includes a first plug **126**, which as shown is disposed on the end opposite the first aperture **116**, which can be removed from the first portion **110** to facilitate the addition of ungrounded spice to the first portion **110**. Likewise, second portion **150** includes a second plug **166**, disposed on the end opposite the second aperture **156**, which can be removed from the second portion **150** to facilitate the addition of ungrounded spice to the second portion **150**. It will be understood that such plugs **126**, **166** can be located in other areas of the portions **110**, **150**.

Turning now to FIG. **4**, a perspective exploded view of a spice grinding and dispensing device **200** in accordance with exemplary embodiments of the invention. The spice grinding and dispensing device **200** includes a first end piece **210** and a second end piece **250** that each include an aperture through which ground spice is dispensed. The spice grinding and dispensing device **200** also includes a dispensing aperture cover, which may be constructed of various materials depending on the spice to be dispensed. In one embodiment, the dispensing aperture cover can be constructed of stainless steel or similarly sturdy and non-corrosive material.

A first dispensing aperture cover **230** and a second dispensing aperture cover **270** are designed to be received in the aperture of the first end piece **210** and the second end piece **250**, respectively. The first and second dispensing aperture cover **230** and **270** can be fixedly attached to first and second adjustment bars **228** and **268**, respectively. The first dispensing aperture cover **230** moves with the first adjustment bar **228** when a user rotates the first adjustment ring **212**, thereby partially covering or uncovering the rectangular shaped open-

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ing in the first end piece part **210**. Likewise, the second dispensing aperture cover **270** moves with the second adjustment bar **268** when a user rotates the second adjustment ring **252**, thereby partially covering or uncovering the rectangular shaped opening in the second end piece part **250**.

The spice grinding and dispensing device **200** also includes a first handle **222** that actuates a first rasp holder **216** against the force of a first spring **218**. A first rasp **220** is affixed to the first rasp holder **216** and is designed to grind a spice responsive to the force exerted on the first handle **222**. Additionally, the spice grinding and dispensing device **200** includes a second handle **262** that actuates a second rasp holder **256** against the force of a second spring **258**. A second rasp **260** is affixed to the second rasp holder **256** and is designed to grind a spice responsive to the force exerted on the second handle **262**.

The spice grinding and dispensing device **200** also includes a first housing **214** and a second housing **254** that are designed to receive the components of the spice grinding and dispensing device **200**. In exemplary embodiments, a portion of the first housing **214** and the second housing **254** can be constructed of a translucent plastic material such that a user can view the amount of ungrounded spice in the spice grinding and dispensing device **200**. Additionally, another portion of the first housing **214** and the second housing **254** can be constructed of a non-slip, or rubber like, material that is designed to facilitate the user's grip of the spice grinding and dispensing device **200**.

The spice grinding and dispensing device **200** includes a first plug **224** and a second plug **264**, which are designed to be removably affixed to the first housing **214** and the second housing **254**, and allow a user to add or remove spices from the spice grinding and dispensing device **200**. Additionally, the spice grinding and dispensing device **200** includes a first grip portion **226** and a second grip portion **266** that are part of the first housing **214** and the second housing **254**, respectively. The first grip portion **226** and the second grip portion **266** are at least partially constructed of a rubber like material to facilitate gripping of the spice grinding and dispensing device **200**. The first grip portion **226** and the second grip portion **266** are disposed, respectively, on the outer surface of the first housing **214** and the second housing **254** such that the first grip portion **226** and the second grip portion **266** do not overlap one another. A mating assembly **202** is used to join the housings **214**, **254** together, via a quarter-turn screw connection to the inside of both the first housing **214** and the second housing **254**, thereby joining them together. The mating assembly **202** can also be designed to work in another similar suitable manner.

Numerous characteristics and advantages have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with details of structure and function. While the invention has been disclosed in several forms, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many modifications, additions, and deletions, especially in matters of shape, size, and arrangement of parts, can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention and its equivalents as set forth in the following claims. Therefore, other modifications or embodiments as may be suggested by the teachings herein are particularly reserved as they fall within the breadth and scope of the claims here appended.

What is claimed is:

1. A grinding and dispensing device comprising:

a first portion and a second portion, each capable of separately containing contents to be grinded and dispensed; and

a mating assembly for releasably securing the first portion to the second portion;

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each of the first and second portions including a hand-activated grinding assembly comprising a rasp activation trigger and a rasp mechanism, whereupon activation, the rasp mechanism grinds at least a portion of the contents in the portion, and the ground up portion of the contents capable of dispensing from the portion;

wherein the hand-activated grinding assembly is single-hand activatable, enabling a user to both grind contents, and dispense ground contents, in either or both the first and the second portions with only a single hand;

wherein at least one of the portions comprises an adjustable dispenser, such that a user can select the granularity level of ground contents that can be dispensed from the at least one portion; and

wherein the adjustable dispenser is single-hand activatable, enabling a user to grind contents, adjust the granularity level of ground contents, and dispense the ground contents, with only a single hand.

2. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 1, wherein each portion has a content filling end located in proximity to the mating assembly, and a dispensing end located distal the content filling end.

3. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 2, wherein the mating assembly comprises male and female elements cooperatively placed and sized for snapping engagement of the first portion to the second portion.

4. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 2, wherein the mating assembly comprises a threaded assembly for threading the first portion to the second portion.

5. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 2, wherein the mating assembly comprises a quarter-turn screw connection to the inside of both the first portion and the second portion, thereby joining them together.

6. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 2, wherein the content filling end of each portion comprises a releasable plug assembly for enabling the filling of each portion with content through the plug assembly, and wherein the dispensing end of each portion comprises an adjustable dispenser, such that a user can select the granularity level of ground contents that can be dispensed from the dispensing end of each portion.

7. A grinding and dispensing device comprising:

a first portion and a second portion, each capable of separately containing contents to be grinded and dispensed, each portion comprising:

a content container having a dispensing end and a filling end;

a hand-activated grinding assembly comprising a rasp activation trigger and a rasp mechanism, whereupon activation, the rasp mechanism grinds at least a portion of the contents in the portion, wherein the hand-activated grinding assembly is single-hand activatable, enabling a user to both grind contents, and dispense ground contents, in either or both the first and the second portions with only a single hand; and an adjustable dispenser, such that a user can select the granularity level of ground contents that can be dispensed from the dispensing end of the portion, wherein the adjustable dispenser is single-hand activatable, enabling a user to grind contents, adjust the granularity level of ground contents, and dispense the ground contents, with only a single hand;

and a mating assembly for releasably securing the first portion to the second portion at the filling end of the portions.

8. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 7, wherein the content filling end of each portion comprises a releasable

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plug assembly for enabling the filling of each portion with content through the plug assembly.

9. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 7, wherein each hand-activated grinding assembly further comprises a spring providing a spring-loaded rasp.

10. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 7, wherein the mating assembly comprises male and female elements cooperatively placed and sized for snapping engagement of the first portion to the second portion.

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11. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 7, wherein the mating assembly comprises a threaded assembly for threading the first portion to the second portion.

12. The grinding and dispensing device of claim 7, wherein the mating assembly comprises a quarter-turn screw connection to the inside of both the first portion and the second portion, thereby joining them together.

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